

New bird records from Budongo and Kifu forests, Uganda, with an addition to the East African avifauna

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The avifauna of Kifu Forest near Kampala (0°26N, 32°44E) was discussed by Hamel (1980), while Howard (1991) listed the bird species known from Budongo Forest, western Uganda (1°45N, 31°35E). During the course of visits to these forests in October 1992, several bird species were recorded which apparently constitute new records. These are discussed below; one species, the Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti*, represents an addition to the avifauna of Uganda and East Africa.

Cassin's Spinetail *Neafrapus cassini*

One individual of this species was seen flying low over the canopy of Kifu Forest nature reserve on 17 October 1992 by Dr J. F. Walsh and me. It was identified by its all-white lower breast, belly and undertail coverts, contrasting with the dark throat and upper breast; the extremely short tail (shorter than the swept back wing tips) and the characteristic shape of the wings. The wings showed very broad secondaries, wider than both the tertials (which thus formed a notch where the trailing edge of the wing met the body) and the inner primaries. The outer primaries, by contrast, were long and held curved backwards so that the wing tips appeared hook-shaped. Thus the silhouette was very distinctive, as was the fluttering mode of flight.

Cassin's Spinetail has hitherto only been recorded in East Africa from Budongo Forest (Britton 1980), where indeed three were seen on 25 October 1992 in company with several Sabine's Spinetails *Rhaphidura sabini*.

Sabine's Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini*

Two Sabine's Spinetails were also seen at Kifu on 17 October 1992 at the same site as the Cassin's Spinetail described above. They resembled Cassin's Spinetail in general colouration except for the prominent white upper tail and rump. They also had a much more 'conventional' silhouette with a conspicuously longer tail and wings of more uniform width. This species has not previously been recorded from Kifu but is known from the nearby Mabira Forest (Hamel 1980).

Grey-throated Barbet *Gymnobucco bonapartei*

Two individuals, seen in Budongo on 25 October 1992, seem, surprisingly, to constitute the first record of the species for this forest (Britton 1980, Howard 1991). However, as this fact was not appreciated at the time the observation was made, no further details were recorded.

Willcocks' Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksi*

A Speckled Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* was seen in Budongo Forest on 9 October 1992 along the section of the road that leads to Sonso saw-mill known as the Royal Mile, behaving in an agitated manner and making chattering alarm calls. It soon became apparent that the object of its excitement was a honeyguide which the tinkerbird seemed to be trying to drive away. After some minutes a second tinkerbird was seen in a hole some 3 m above the ground in the trunk of a tree bordering the road.

The first tinkerbird repeatedly flew at the honeyguide which in response would move to a new perch, usually only a few metres distant. The honeyguide seemed to be behaving in a manner intended to make itself conspicuous as it always flew with its white outer tail feathers fanned wide and repeatedly alighted on the exposed, bare vertical trunk of a pale-barked tree, against which it stood out clearly. Occasionally the honeyguide would, in its turn, fly at the tinkerbird to displace it: when the honeyguide approached the (probable) nest hole the mobbing behaviour of the tinkerbird increased in intensity.

This scene was watched at close range (to less than 10 m) for over an hour during which the following description of the honeyguide was taken. Size small, slightly larger than the tinkerbird. Head plain grey but with some faint darker streaking on the forehead and mid-crown, visible only at close range; no loreal spot or malar stripe, but with an indistinct pale eye-ring most obvious in front and behind the eye. Upperpart feathering, including the rump, dark olive-green with paler outer edges, giving a dark mottled appearance with the contrast most marked on the flight feathers. Central tail feathers dark, outer ones white except for dark tips ventrally. Underparts grey, plain except for some darker streaking on the flanks. Bill short, stubby and dark except for a paler base to the lower mandible. Legs dark. The similarity in overall colour and pattern of the two species was striking. A honeyguide of similar appearance was seen briefly at the same spot on 11 October, against which the Speckled Tinkerbird was still defending its territory.

The bird was subsequently identified as Willcocks' Honeyguide which Britton (1980) states has previously only been recorded in Uganda from the Impenetrable, Kibale and Kalinzu forests. Willcocks' Honeyguide is thought to be "probably nest-parasitic in its breeding habits" (Fry *et al.* 1988). These observations suggest that Speckled Tinkerbird may be a host.

Purple-throated Cuckoo Shrike *Campephaga quiscalina*

A pair was seen and heard in the canopy of Kifu Forest nature reserve on 4 October 1992. While the male was not seen well, the female was readily identifiable. The head was grey, palest on the throat and with a pale supercilium and a darker eye-stripe. The remainder of the upperparts were pale yellow-green; the underparts from breast to under tail coverts were plain bright yellow with no darker barring visible. The call was a penetrating peeoo, descending in pitch.

Carswell (1986) states that this species is "recorded in the literature from Mabira forest", while elsewhere in Uganda it is known from Mubende and Mt Elgon (Britton 1980).

Tit *Hylia Pholidornis rushiae*

This species was seen in both Kifu Forest nature reserve (4 October 1992) and along the Royal Mile in Budongo (9 October 1992). In both instances two individuals were seen together gleaning from small branches in the forest canopy. They were identified from the following details. The overall appearance was somewhat reminiscent in size, general shape and method of feeding of a penduline tit *Remiz* sp. The head, mantle and upper breast were dirty grey with conspicuous darker streaking; the wings and tail were dark, almost blackish, while the lower breast and belly were orange-red. The bill was short, straight and dark and the legs red. This species has only previously been recorded in East Africa from Mabira Forest (Britton 1980, Carswell 1986).

Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti*

An individual of this species was seen in Budongo Forest from a track close to the Royal Mile on 11 October 1992. It was in the company of a mixed bird party and was watched from a distance of some 30–40 m for 2–3 min in good light as it gleaned food acrobatically from branch tips, twigs, etc. in the lower canopy, at a height of some 15–20 m. The bird was obviously a crombec *Sylvietta* as it had a very short, to the point of non-existent, tail. The sides of the head were grey with an indistinct paler supercilium and a rather darker eye-stripe. The upperparts were entirely grey-green, darkest on the crown. Below there was an ill-defined gingerish patch on the throat merging into grey on the upper breast while the lower breast, belly and under tail coverts were yellow. The legs were pale and the bill all dark.

This appears to be the first East African record of this species although its presence in Uganda is not unexpected, as was recently pointed out by Ash *et al.* (1991), since it is known from near Beni (0°28N, 29°28E) on the Zaïre side of the Semliki valley (Chapin 1953).

With the exception of the spinetails and the barbet, all species were watched through a x20 telescope, which greatly helped the certain identification of the Tit Hylia and the crombec. The author has previous experience of all the species discussed above, as has Dr Walsh of the spinetail.

References

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